CHINESE AVAILABLES FOR PEACE COMMISSIONERS

NEXT to a responsible government, the crying need of the hour in China, it would seem, is a body of patriotic statesmen that can rise to the occasion and satisfy the demands made upon the country at this crucial period of its existence. The emperor, the empress dowager—all, in fact, who constitute the official court—having fled to the interior and basely abandoned their trust, the government was left without a head. This anomalous condition of affairs, though it might be considered in the light of poetic justice, since the official personnel has been so often depleted by the loss of individual heads, was yet almost as embarrassing to the victorious allies as to the conquered Mantchoo-Chinese.

The allied forces had assaulted and carried the walls of Peking by storm, they had accomplished the object of their long and toilsome march from the coast—the relief of the legations; they had even made their triumphal entry into the precincts of the hitherto inviolate Forbidden City. Then they were compelled to halt and wait the initiative of the foe they had overcome.

It seems to have become an accepted truism of international relationship that even a bad government is far better when it comes to diplomatic intercourse than no government at all, and the leaders of the allies may have regretted that before advancing upon Peking they had not executed a grand flank movement with a portion of their forces and intercepted the recreant sovereigns on the way to their place of refuge at Hsian-Fu. This contingency of flight had not been anticipated, or, if anticipated, had not been guarded against, and by their cowardly retreat the self secluded Mantchoos had, in popular parlance, put the allies "in a hole." This may have been their intention at the outset, but the more reasonable supposition is that their flight was prompted by cowardice and fear of the consequences righteously due for the base betrayal of their obligations.

However this may have been, the first step of the allies toward extricating themselves from the dilemma was to seek some responsible person or persons with whom to treat for peace and adjust the penalties to be applied. Like a schoolboy shrinking from well merited punishment, the real culprits in this affair sought to delay the castigation as long as possible. But, unlike the average schoolboy known to Americans, when pressed to the wall they put forward an irresponsible third party to act as a buffer and bear the brunt of battle.

Li Hung Chang was the person selected to act for the self decapitated government, but, though it was admitted that his headpiece was perhaps as good as that which adorned the shoulders of the empress dowager or the "Son of Heaven" himself, the powers were somewhat dubious as to his real status, and particularly as to his rank. In default of the presence in Peking of the nominal emperor or the actually reigning regent, the personage by them deputed to act for the government ought to be at least next in rank to and connected with the royal family through ties of blood. Both the emperor and the empress dowager are supposed to be so enveloped in the odor of sanctity as to be unapproachable by ordinary individuals, even if of the most exalted rank in European courts, so that these two were out of the question. Failing them, the duty devolved next upon some of the princes attached to the throne, and in their default upon some members of the nobility.

Now, there is this peculiarity, both in the peerage and the succession to the throne, that neither is, in the strictest sense, hereditary. While the succession to the great "dragon throne" is in a manner hereditary in the family, the reigning emperor has the inalienable right to choose his own successor from among his own sons, if he have any, according to his ability. If he should fail to do this and die without having manifested his choice, his brothers or uncles, being royal princes, may meet and choose their sovereign from the family immediately succeeding. The so called "heir apparent" of China, who was chosen to succeed the present emperor, Kwang-su, is the son of a royal prince attached to the cause of the empress dowager. The succession is altogether a family and not an individual affair, and that is what makes it so peculiarly interesting.

The Chinese have also been very chary in bestowing their patents of nobility, and they are never perpetually hereditary. In each succeeding generation the rank diminishes, until at last the ennobled ancestor becomes a mere memory, as the family joins the common herd again, and if there are in the future any nobles they must gain their titles by their own deeds.

There is one exception to the rule, and that is in the family of the revered Confucius, whose dukedom has descended to each direct heir for more than 2,000 years, and the Duke Kung of today lives on the same land his great ancestor once occupied.

Even in the royal family the imperial descendants lose one degree in each generation, until in the fourth they have reached the level of the common people. But thereafter, while they may not have official titles, they are permitted to wear the yellow girdle and are known as huang daizas, or yellow girdlemen of royal descent, the capital city being well supplied with them. Some of the Chinese boast of their descent from the house of Han, which ceased to reign 1,700 years ago, but the title of "Han-lin" or "Han-tse," sons of Han, carrying, as it does, a prestige for courage and noble lineage, is indiscriminately used by others than the actual descendants of that royal family. It is by this means that a great and powerful dynasty is held in remembrance to the present day, as also is another, the famous house of Tang, which terminated a thousand years ago. But the present dynasty, the Tsing, dating from 1664, is never complimented by the Chinese in a similar manner. Popular aversion to the Tartar house is too deep seated for any Chinaman to allude to himself as a "son of Tsing," even though he wear the pigtail which the ancient Mantchoos imposed upon his ancestors as a seal of their authority.

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It has been Li Hung Chang's boast that he was instrumental in putting down one of the greatest uprisings of modern times; but when it is recalled that the men most in evidence in suppressing the Chinese rebellion, the Taiping, were an American, Frederick G. Ward, and an Englishman, "Chinese" Gordon, and that the latter searched high and low for the deceitful Li at one time, intending to shoot him for double dealing, Chang's statement will have to be taken with a grain of salt.

The Arabs have a saying that if a man will keep silence, look wise enough and sit still long enough he may gain a reputation for great wisdom. And this seems to have been the case with Li Hung Chang. On the strength of the battles won by Gordon and his "ever victorious" army, Li was made governor of Suchau, and afterward viceroy of Chi-li, in which latter capacity it was his misfortune to become involved in the war with Japan in 1894-5. Whatever credit the world outside China may have given him for his part in that war, it was made manifest that his services were hardly considered brilliant by the court, for he lost his feather and yellow jacket and had to go to Japan as plenipotentiary in order to save his reputation. If he had not been shot in the cheek by a fanatic while in Japan conducting the peace negotiations, he might have lost his head when he returned to Peking, for the treaty he signed, notwithstanding the leniency of the Japanese on account of his wound, was about as bad as any that could have been made for China. But the wound in his cheek, so to speak, saved his "face," and perhaps his head, so that he still lives, at the age of 78, to again lead a forlorn hope for China's benefit. In this connection, as having a possible bearing and casting light upon present developments, it may be remarked that Li was accused of having a secret understanding with Russia, by which that power came into possession of Port Arthur and the Liao-Tung as residuary legatee after Japan had been ousted, owing to Russia's protest. Acute observers of the present situation may detect a possible parallel between the recent action of Russia in proposing to withdraw her troops from Peking and occurrences precedent to the forcing out of Japan from Port Arthur, and also infer therefrom that a claim will be made by the czar for remuneration on account of having taken this initiative in the matter. At all events there is little doubt that Earl Li's sympathies, as well as those of his imperial mistress, are pro-Russian, and the other powers may well view his appointment as supreme plenipotentiary with deep distrust.

There seems to be an opinion outside China that Li Hung Chang is the man who stands head and shoulders above all his contemporaries, particularly as a statesman and diplomat. This opinion is based mainly upon the fact that he has been the most highly honored of Chinamen abroad; but when it is known that that famous journey of his around the world was not the triumphal progress of a successful general, or even of an accredited envoy, but rather of one who had been sent out of China to be got rid of, as for the time being he was very much in the way, it will be seen that he was received with honors to which he was by no means entitled. And such has been Li's record from the first. He has been the recipient of wealth and honors which were not honestly earned—particularly the enormous riches with which he is credited. As the Chinese put it, "Every dog that barks for Li is fat!" But time usually brings about its revenges. The "Grand Old Man of China" is at last about to be subjected to the supreme test of his life, and, with the powers to placate on one hand and his suspicious countrymen to pacify on the other, it will be somewhat strange if he does not risk his honors or his head.

It is surmised that Li Hung Chang, notwithstanding his advanced views, is against the foreigners, with a reservation in favor of Russia, but there is not the shadow of a doubt that the empress dowager is antiforeign. So it was not a matter of surprise that she should have nominated three Mantchoos as Li's coadjutors, two of whom were rabid reactionists. The Chinese peace commission, as the empress dowager at first had it constituted, consisted of one galvanized Celestial, or Chinaman—Li Hung Chang—and three Mantchoos—Yung Lu, Hsu Tung and Prince Ching.

When the Mantchoos are compared with the true Chinese, it is seen that, while the former have the greatest military men, the latter possess a monopoly of statesmen. It is said that there is not a single man among the Mantchoos who has won a reputation as a diplomat, and that China is mainly represented abroad by descendants of the despised people who were brought under subjection to the Tartars at the founding of the Tsing dynasty.

One of the most eminent of the Mantchoos is Prince Ching, who at one time was said to be openly aiding the legations at Peking when they were in dire distress. He is not reckoned as a foe of the foreigners, even if not imbued with the advanced ideas of the "reformers." He is of royal blood, a son of Prince Kung, who, at the invasion of the allies in 1860, was the only member of the imperial family who remained in Peking. As the oldest nephew of the Emperor Tung Chih, who died without heirs in 1875, Prince Ching might have been chosen to ascend the throne but for the fact that his elevation would have meant, according to Chinese etiquette, the retirement of his father, whose services were considered invaluable. So he was passed over in favor of his cousin, the present emperor, and has remained with the court in an advisory capacity. He was at one time president of the tsung-li-yamen, which his father established, and when in that position was interviewed by Lord Charles Beresford, whose views seemed to make an impression on the prince, though he is ranked as a conservative and proudly boasts that he has never been outside the limits of his native province. Until the recent outbreak caused the disruption of the royal household and his deposition by his rival, Prince Tuan, he was commander of the Peking field force charged with the protection of the emperor and the capital. He is about 60 years old, of medium stature and is considered prudent and sensible.

Yung Lu, another Mantchoo favorably regarded by the empress dowager, was yet said to be opposed to Prince Tuan in his operations against the legations, and some years ago he incurred the displeasure of the emperor by ordering his chief eunuch, who was recently reported to have committed suicide, to be bastinadoed. A man of force and independence, Yung Lu rose rapidly in rank through the various army grades until he was appointed captain general of the White Banners and made a member of the tsung-li-yamen, soon afterward being promoted to be inspector general at Peking and later lieutenant general of the Yellow Banners. He was appointed viceroy of Pe-chi-li and generalissimo of the Chinese armies in 1898, having in four years risen to some of the highest positions by a combination of native shrewdness and good fortune at court. He is credited with having saved the life of the emperor on at least one occasion, notwithstanding that his sovereign had issued a decree of banishment against him on account of his treatment of his chief eunuch. All Europeans who have met him agree that he is well informed and progressive in some respects, but few regard him as a friend of the foreigners when the issue at stake is the liberties of China.

The fourth favorite of the empress dowager for peace commissioner, Hsu Tung, is neither Mantchoo nor Chinese, but by birth a Mohammedan, from central Asia, according to the army records. He was long stationed on the frontier, where he gained a reputation for activity, though he is not considered a great military man, as opposed to any general the foreigners might bring against him. He put down a Mohammedan rebellion in 1896 and thereby rose to great prominence, but he has all along been considered too turbulent and bloodthirsty for service near the Chinese capital. Of the Mantchoo and Chinese commanders prominent in the Chino-Japanese war very few are still in command of China's forces, but one, General Ma, was quite conspicuous in the late hostilities, and he may perhaps be ranked with Hsu Tung in ability.

In reviewing the military men of the empire, decidedly the most conspicuous is Prince Tuan, who showed his hatred of foreigners by persistent attempts to destroy the unfortunate noncombatants confined so long within the walls of Peking. He is the grandson of the Emperor Taouk Wang, who died in 1856, and nephew of Emperor Hien Fung, who died in 1861, and, like Prince Ching, a cousin of the present Emperor Kwang-su. It is not at all probable that one of his sanguinary proclivities will be allowed to participate in the peace conference, even if the wary Mantchoo should place himself within reach of his adversaries, but it would be consonant with the empress dowager's wishes, doubtless, for him to take part. His atrocities have placed him beyond the pale, but the singular obtuseness of the Mantchoos, which saw no wrong in seizing the foreign ministers and holding them as hostages and felt no apprehension on account of the unspeakable outrages upon the missionaries and native Christians, might admit of his being named. He has always been quite near the throne, and especially very closely allied with the empress dowager, a sufficient proof of imperial favor being the selection of his 14-year-old son to be the coming emperor, thus bestowing upon him the dignity of father to the heir apparent. He will be a man to reckon with in any event, for the empress dowager has thoroughly committed herself to his guidance and would not readily cast him off, even if there were no other ties and influences to bind him to the throne.

The influence of such men as Prince Tuan, unfortunately, has been exerted toward the destruction of the empire rather than in promoting its prosperity. Indeed, there have been reports of his sinister designs upon the hapless Kwang-su, nominal ruler by grace of the empress dowager.

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One of the greatest names at present standing forth is that of Sheng Taotai, the director general of railways and telegraphs, who resides at Shanghai. It has been said of him that he has a European head on Chinese shoulders, for he is a man of affairs, extremely capable and comprehensive in his grasp of public questions. He is also noted for his capacity for grasping other things, particularly lucre.

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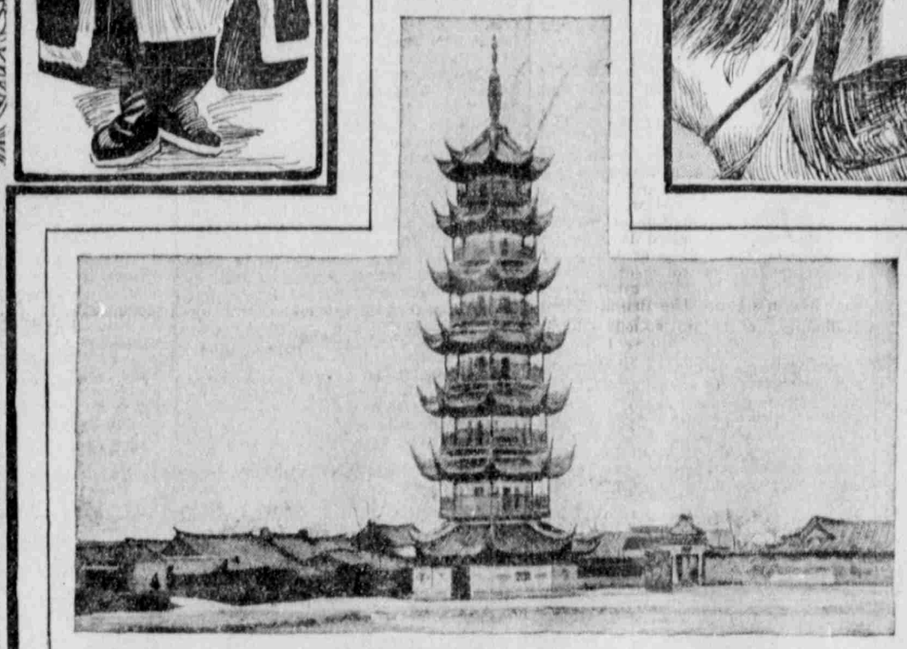

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THE TRAINS OF THE CZAR AND KAISER.

Very costly are the trains of modern sovereigns, and even the beautiful and commodious train of Queen Victoria, which, by the bye, is kept in Brussels when not in use, cannot be compared in magnificence with that of the kaiser. This cost nearly $500,000, and consists of 12 carriages, connected by corridors. The drawing room car is superbly furnished and is hung with splendid gobelin tapestry from one of the state apartments at the palace at Charlottenburg. The nursery compartments are exquisitely fitted up, and the sleeping apartments each have the luxury of a fixed bath. The kitchen arrangements of the imperial train are perfect, and the kaiser has his traveling canteens of glass, china, plate, etc., so that everything is at hand for serving up the most complicated repasts at a short notice. When passing through a large town in the course of a journey, the Emperor William makes a point of standing or sitting on a high chair, so that his faithful subjects may have an opportunity of seeing him.

The Russian imperial train is a marvel of luxury, and the czarina's car is quite a dream of beauty. In none of the older Russian palaces is luxury to be found equal to that which is exhibited in the imperial train.

British visitors at St. Petersburg often express astonishment at the utter lack of comfort and modern appliances in the sometimes gorgeously handsome suits of rooms occupied by the Russian royal family when at home, and the same thing appeared to have greatly impressed the late President Faure on the occasion of his visit to Russia. It is strange that such great luxury should be indulged in by the royal family when traveling, as they are content to do with such very poor accommodation at home.

HIS LAST MESSAGE.

Mr. Treves, the celebrated English surgeon who went to South Africa to look after Tommy Atkins, tells some curious stories of his experience, mostly illustrating the stoicism of the common soldier. One day he found a soldier in hospital, wounded to death, his nurse kneeling, with pencil and paper, by his side. "Wouldn't you like to send a message to anybody in particular?" she asked. "I'd like to send one to my girl," said the soldier. "What shall I say?" asked the nurse, with pencil poised. For a few moments his emotions struggled for literary expression. "Give her my kind regards," he said.

Danish lighthouses are supplied with oil to pump on the waves during a storm.

A MERCHANT WITH MANDARIN'S BUTTON.

The expression, "Money talks," may have had its origin in China, for at all events it has a voice in affairs. The itching palm and "palm oil" are notorious in political as well as business transactions, the politicians generally possessing the palm and the business men the lubricant. It is owing to this universal desire to amass lucre and the unlimited means for granting titular honors at the disposition of the court that many a mandarin, like the original of this illustration, has obtained his coveted "button," or emblem of rank.

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW.

The new engines of the Denver and Rio Grande railway have a novel fitting for preventing train robbers from climbing over the tender. They have a pipe extending along the roof of the cab and connected with the boiler. Through this pipe, without making a perceptible motion, either the engineer or fireman can send, at a 200 pound pressure, a jet of steam and boiling water that would effectually kill or injure anything living that happened to be on the tender or the front end of the baggage car.

A slump in early Kiplings has been noted at recent London auction sales. The "Schoolboy Lyrics," which a couple of years ago brought $650, has been sold recently for $16.25.

There is much to be learned after the world's capture of China. Many scientists believe that the nucleus of great events is imbedded amid the mysteries of that great region of country, which may not be so benighted as is generally supposed. The preservation of grapes, to make use of one illustration of Chinese industry, is one of the many things that is only known in that country.

An apparatus for condensing sea fog into drinking water has been invented by Professor Bell. It will be welcomed as a desideratum by ocean voyagers.

The ceremonies at the creation of a knight have been various. The principal features were a box on the ear and a stroke with a sword on the shoulder. The blow with the naked fist was in use among the ancient Normans. It was afterward changed into a blow with the flat of the sword on the shoulder of the knight, and this ceremony is still in use.

Ice has proved successful as an insulator on Mont Blanc. A double line of ordinary galvanized iron wire was laid on the ground between the Grands Mulets at the top of the mountain and the Petits Mulets at the base. Each line was 5,500 feet long. Messages were sent without trouble, and the loss of electricity, as measured by the instruments, was very slight.

There are many dormant accounts in the savings banks. They result from many causes, such as crime, loss of memory or reason, sudden death or neglect on the part of a depositor to make a proper memorandum of where he placed the money.

long. This year's harvest from it will come close to 4,000 carloads. An average crop is 200 bushels an acre.

With a population of 5,500,000, London harbors every day 120,000 foreigners.